

## CLAIMS

### What is claimed is:

1. A gaming method comprising:

providing at least one player an opportunity to play a base game;  
generating an outcome from the play of the base game by the at least one player;  
qualifying the at least one player for participation in a bonus game, said qualifying dependent on  
the outcome from play of the base game; and

providing a player qualifying for the bonus game an opportunity for one of participating in the  
bonus game and returning to the base game, the participating in the bonus game by a  
player qualifying for the bonus game including at least one player of the base game  
enabled to participate in a contest including a challenge of at least one player by a  
challenging entity.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein qualifying for participation in the bonus game  
includes the at least one player obtaining a selected outcome from the base game.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing the at least one player playing the base game an opportunity to select  
a character for bonus game play from a plurality of characters; and  
the at least one player selecting a character from the plurality of characters.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising:

assigning the character selected by said at least one player to a team comprised of a plurality of  
players.

5. The method of claim 3, further comprising:

providing each of the plurality of characters with at least one associated attribute, the at least one  
associated attribute for the each of the characters being modifiable.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the at least one associated attribute for the selected character includes an associated attribute comprising at least one factor for determining at least one of at least a portion of a course of action of the bonus game and at least a portion of an outcome of the bonus game.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein the at least one player selecting the character is enabled to purchase an opportunity for modifying the at least one associated attribute for the character.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising at least one of the base game generating a winning outcome and awarding credits to the at least one player and the base game not generating a winning outcome and deducting credits from the at least one player.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one challenged player is either a player of the base game or a computer-generated player.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
providing the at least one challenged player with an opportunity of one of accepting the challenge or surrendering to the challenge such that accepting of the challenge to play comprises conducting the contest between said at least one player and the another player and awarding credits to a winner of the contest and surrendering to the challenge comprises deducting credits from the surrendering player and awarding said credits to the challenging entity.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the contest comprises determining a winner based at least in part on a result of a random number being generated.

12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
playing the base game and the bonus game on a gaming machine.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

networking together a plurality of gaming machines for playing the bonus game such that at least two players at different gaming machines may play the bonus game.

14. The method of claim 13, further comprising:

converting the gaming machine from a first mode of operation for playing the base game to a second mode of operation for playing the bonus game.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising administering the bonus game from a location other than any of the gaming machines.

16. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing a plurality of gaming machines, each gaming machine convertible between the play of the base game in a first mode of operation and the play of the bonus game in a second mode of operation;

the at least one player qualifying for play in the bonus game through play of the base game in the first mode of operation from any one of the gaming machines of the plurality; and

the at least one player playing the bonus game on at least one gaming machine of the plurality after the conversion thereof to the second mode of operation.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the base game comprises a game of chance.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the base game is selected from a reel-type slot machine game and a video card game.

19. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing the at least one player an opportunity to place a wager for play of the base game.

20. The method of claim 5, further comprising:

storing information about the associated attributes for the characters.

21. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

conducting the bonus game according to a Western theme on the gaming machine.

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising:

providing the at least one player with a wanted value associated with the bonus game; and  
providing at least one other player an opportunity to win a reward in bonus game play related to,  
the wanted value, the opportunity to win the reward being related to an outcome of play  
of the base game.

23. A method of conducting an interactive gaming activity, comprising:

providing at least one player an opportunity to select a character, the at least one player having an  
option for modifying at least one associated attribute for the character; and  
providing the at least one player an opportunity for qualifying for at least one interactive game,  
comprising:

a contest between a challenging player and a challenged player, wherein the challenged  
player is provided with an option of one of surrendering to the challenging player  
or participating in the contest with the challenging player, the acceptance of  
participating by the challenged player resulting in implementation of the contest to  
result in at least one of a course of action of the contest and an outcome of the  
contest being determined at least in part by at least one attribute of the character  
selected by the at least one player.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the opportunity to qualify for at least one  
interactive game comprises playing a game of chance.

25. The method of claim 23, further including determining at least a portion of the outcome of the contest using a random number generator.

26. The method of claim 23, wherein at least one associated attribute for the character alters the outcome of the contest.

27. The method of claim 23, further comprising:  
providing a wanted value to the at least one player; and  
providing the at least one other player an opportunity for winning a reward, the amount of the reward based on the wanted value, the opportunity for winning being provided responsive to an outcome of a base game of chance.

28. A gaming apparatus, comprising:  
a base gaming unit enabling a first mode of operation for playing a base game and generating an outcome therefor  
a bonus gaming unit operably coupled to the base gaming unit and enabling a second mode of operation for playing a bonus game responsive to at least one outcome of the base game, the bonus game comprising an opportunity for one of participating in the bonus game and returning to the base game, the bonus game comprising a first player challenging at least one other player to a contest.

29. The gaming apparatus of claim 28, further comprising:  
a display operably coupled to the base gaming unit, the display for exhibiting at least one outcome of the base game and for exhibiting the results of the contest.

30. The gaming apparatus of claim 28, further comprising:  
a microprocessor associated with the base gaming unit for generating at least one outcome of the base game.

31. The gaming apparatus of claim 28, further comprising:  
a microprocessor associated with the bonus gaming unit for conducting the contest.

32. The gaming apparatus of claim 28, further comprising:  
at least one other base gaming unit operably coupled to the base gaming unit over a network.

33. The gaming apparatus of claim 31, wherein the base gaming unit and the at least one other base gaming unit are located in at least two mutually remote locations.

34. The gaming apparatus of claim 28, wherein the bonus gaming unit is configured to initiate the bonus game responsive to at least one play of the base game.

35. The gaming apparatus of claim 28, wherein the bonus gaming unit is configured to enable bonus game play between players at two gaming machines.

36. The gaming apparatus of claim 28, further including a communication link to at least one other base gaming unit.

37. The gaming apparatus of claim 28, further comprising a display for displaying a course of action and an outcome of a conducted contest.

38. The gaming apparatus of claim 28, further comprising a display for displaying values associated with players at a plurality of base gaming units.

39. The gaming apparatus of claim 28, further comprising:  
a computer separate from and operably coupled to the base gaming unit and the bonus gaming unit for administering the bonus game.

40. The gaming apparatus of claim 28, wherein the bonus game further comprises enabling at least one player playing the base game to select a character from a plurality of characters, at least one of assigning a selected character to a team and providing each of the plurality of characters with at least one associated attribute, the at least one associated attribute for each character being subject to modification by the at least one player selecting that character.

41. The gaming apparatus of claim 28, wherein the bonus game further comprises providing the at least one other player with at least one of an opportunity for accepting a challenge by the first player or surrendering to the first player, the first player accepting the challenge followed by conduct of a contest between the first player and the at least one other player and awarding credits to a winner of the contest, the at least one other player surrendering followed by having credits deducted from a value associated with the at least one other player and awarded to the first player.

42. The gaming apparatus of claim 40, further comprising:  
a storage system for storing modified associated attributes for a selected character after modification by the at least one player.

43. A gaming system, comprising:  
at least one gaming machine including:  
at least one base gaming unit for generating an outcome from play of a base game and enabling qualification for play of a bonus game;  
at least one bonus game unit operably coupled to the at least one base gaming unit for administering the bonus game to at least one qualified player, the bonus game including providing a qualified player at least one of an opportunity to participate in the bonus game and return to play of the base game, the participation in the bonus game including challenging at least one player to a contest.

44. The gaming system of claim 43, wherein the bonus game unit is configured for conducting the contest from a remote location.

45. The gaming system of claim 43, comprising a plurality of gaming machines operably coupled to the bonus game unit.

46. The gaming system of claim 45, wherein each gaming machine is operably coupled to the bonus game unit from a location remote therefrom.

47. The gaming system of claim 45, wherein at least two of the gaming machines are mutually remotely located.

48. The gaming system of claim 47, wherein the at least two gaming machines are remotely located from at least one other gaming machine of the plurality of gaming machines.

49. The gaming system of claim 45, wherein the bonus game unit gaming machines of the plurality is configured to conduct the bonus game using a computer at a location remote from at least some of the gaming machines of the plurality through a telecommunications link.

50. The gaming system of claim 49, wherein the bonus game unit outputs data to the computer.

51. The gaming system of claim 43, wherein the gaming machine includes at least one microprocessor for generating the outcome of the base game and enabling participation in the bonus game.

52. The gaming system of claim 43, wherein the bonus game further comprises providing the at least one player an opportunity of at least one of accepting the challenge and surrendering in response to the challenge, the at least one player having credits awarded by accepting the challenge and winning the contest, the at least one player having credits deducted and awarded to a challenging entity by surrendering.

53. A gaming system comprising:  
at least one gaming machine configured for generating an outcome for a base game; a central server computer communicating with said at least one gaming machine, said central server having associate therewith:  
a bonus game unit configured for play of a bonus game in response to an outcome of the base game qualifying a player therefor, the bonus game comprises providing a qualified player at least one of an opportunity to participate in the bonus game and to return to the base game, the opportunity to participate in the bonus game comprises at least one player being challenged to a contest.

54. The gaming system of claim 53, wherein the at least one gaming machine comprises a personal computer.

55. The gaming system of claim 54, wherein the personal computer is connected to the central server computer over the Internet.

56. The gaming system of claim 53, wherein the bonus game further include:  
providing the at least one player at least one of an opportunity to accept the challenge and to surrender, the at least one player having credits deducted upon surrender and awarded to a challenging entity, the at least one player accepting the challenge being followed by a conduct of the contest with the challenging entity, at least one of the at least one player and the challenging entity having credits awarded upon winning the contest.